



TUFOIC NEWSLETTER

October 2005 Edition 98

A TASMANIAN UFO MYSTERY.

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Introduction.

“UFO Mystery Deepens” said the Hobart Mercury on February 19th, 2005. The article referred to a UFO sighting that had taken place the previous Regatta Day holiday weekend. The UFO sighting near Melton Mowbray in Tasmania’s Southern Midlands had remained unexplained despite considerable enquiries by the Tasmanian UFO Investigation Centre (TUFOIC).

The resultant publicity brought forth a number of reports, complicated by a series of lights cases over Hobart’s waterside suburbs. These lights were soon dismissed by the Police (and TUFOIC) as the work of persons unknown letting off parachute flares.

Sifting through the data collected it became apparent that a mini-flap had occurred in the period late December to February. This was the best sighting flap in the state since 1998.

Prior to the media coverage of the Melton Mowbray case the Centre had only received three unexplained reports during all of 2004. A couple of cases emerged before the publicity, but it is a concern that without any media assistance, the bulk of the sightings would have remained unreported.

The Southern Midlands stretches north from Hobart’s northern suburbs, being mainly rural with areas of bush covered

hills, steep rocky gullies, and mountains from 600 to above 900m. The main north-south highway stretches through the area carrying traffic from Hobart to the north and north-west of the state. The district is also home to many who commute to the city to work but prefer to live in the open country.

The flap got away to a fairly low-key start the evening of December 25th at Molesworth. A group of people were relaxing outside when a star-like light was seen in the area of Orion. At first it was assumed to be a satellite or shooting star. However, the light continued on a path across the northern sky before coming to a halt. The light then reversed direction going out of sight into the north-east sky at an increased speed. The bemused witnesses saw the same or similar light some minutes later performing the same manoeuvre, crossing the sky, then going away to the north-east. This performance was repeated on one more occasion before it disappeared for good.

The first real puzzle of the flap came three days later in the early hours of December 28th near the historic town of Richmond. Anne (1) and her young son were returning from a trip to the East Coast. Her partner was following in a second car some distance behind. She noticed a distant bright light in

the north-west sky. She thought it must be an aircraft enroute to Hobart, but was puzzled by its movement back and forth in the sky.

Anne continued heading home until she reached the hill into Richmond. Passing the Brinktop reserve, she found that the light was approaching rapidly. Within seconds it was passing over the road just ahead so she slowed down and stopped the car. The big light looked to be 2-3m across with a dark area in the centre with a red and blue light below blinking rapidly.

The object was now moving over a brow about 200m distant, and as it did so a beam of light came from the centre of the object and was moving about on the ground below. The next thing Anne knew was that for 30 seconds her car was all lit up by the beam, then everything went dark and the bright object just seemed to have vanished like a light being turned off. Anne's partner now came over the hill and arrived at the scene. He had seen a distant light but not taken much notice.

Nothing else occurred until just after midnight on January 18th. This time our witness was driving to her home just north of Brighton. She turned left off the main highway and was immediately confronted by a strange green football-sized light, which had a rigid green tail. The light was seen initially out of the driver's window, and then it was seemingly just above the car. The witness said the car seemed to lose power at this stage but as she drove over the rise about half a kilometre from the highway, the light had disappeared ahead.

Some minutes later, the witness pulled into her driveway and saw the green light moving rapidly from a northerly direction. She parked the car and got out for a look; at this point the light did a U turn and disappeared in seconds into the area of Orion.

The scene moves north for the next report from Legana some distance outside Launceston. Our two witnesses were up early around 4.30am when they saw a bright 'something' in the south-east. Mr L (1) raced inside to obtain his binoculars for a close inspection as the bright object was moving northwards. Through the binoculars he could see a basically cylindrical object. There appeared to be a band of white light above, yellow in the centre with red light below. As the cylinder moved north it did so with the cylinder at an angle. However, every time the object stopped, the cylinder took up a vertical position. The cylinder would move, and then stop before moving on again. It gradually gained elevation as it moved more to the north-east and was obscured by a cloud bank. The sighting had lasted over 10 minutes leaving Mr L baffled for an explanation.

A Very Close Encounter.

The major sighting of the flap occurred on February 14th soon after midnight. Jane, Terri, and Pam (1) were all travelling north to Devonport. They had made a late start but the weather was fine and they expected a trip not much over 3 hours would see them at their destination.

They left the lights of Hobart behind and some 35 k north of the city they passed through Pontville. Terri in the front passenger seat noticed a set of three star-like lights low over the distant hills ahead, one light being much bigger than the others. At this point in the trip the

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car radio decided to fade out. She said nothing to Jane driving and Pam in the back seat about the light but kept it in view. However, after another 20 km she pointed the light out to the others. Jane thought it may have been a ball marker on low power lines but soon dismissed that idea as the light resolved into a football shape with a steady red light on the left and a blue light on the right.

The light now became an object that was coming towards the car, at this point Jane brought the car to a stop. The object seemed to be on top of them, then over the roadside with a beam shining onto the ground. All three witnesses got out of the car to look at what they took to be some strange aircraft or helicopter. The beam was lighting up a square area in the paddock, and the fence was clearly visible as was the dry grass in the paddock. The beam seemed to come from front or beneath the object. All the witnesses heard a quiet humming sound as the object and beam moved in unison across the paddock at a height of some 20m and distance of 15m. The object was estimated as being 8/10m wide and moving so slow that had it been a plane it would have fallen from the sky.

Descriptions of the object varied at this stage. Jane and Terri described a dark shape above a bright light and beam, the red and blue lights being no longer visible. Pam felt they were looking at the bottom of the object with lights below. As it moved away, the beam went out. Jane saw a dark curved top with some lighter patches; Terri saw a triangle shape like a tail at the rear, and inside this triangle an orange light was revolving in a clockwise direction. Pam recalled a big bright light receding away towards the Kempton hills.

The witnesses now continued on their journey north noting the time of the sighting at 12.12am. They stopped briefly at Perth for a coffee and arrived at a relative's home in Devonport at 3.55am. The trip from Melton Mowbray had taken another 3 ¾ hours, the best part of an hour more than normal. Jane was also puzzled that they left home at exactly 11.38pm but somehow reached Melton Mowbray about midnight, a test drive a few days after the sighting took 50 minutes for the same trip.

Following contact with the Police, the witnesses were referred to TUFOIC. A full investigation proceeded with details of the event collected and contact made with a number of authorities and local contacts (2) in the sighting area. Air traffic, helicopters, and astronomical explanations were soon ruled out. A Department of Defence contact said that to fly in the manner reported in the sighting would only be performed in a life or death situation, anyone attempting to joy ride in that manner would soon crash. Flying anything at night requires training and instrument skills, let alone crossing the country at low level. Military exercises are held in strictly defined locations and not over public areas.

The sighting was reported in the Hobart Mercury (Thursday February 17th). The resultant publicity brought forth more sightings but nothing to help with an explanation for the encounter at Melton Mowbray (3).

Tracking a UFO.

The night following the Melton Mowbray event, the Centre received five interesting sightings; four of the reports within about two hours of each other

and separated by only about 10 km in distance.

Initially a motorist travelling south near Epping Forest about 8.30pm reported a bright round white light which appeared to the rear of his motor vehicle. He was able to look to the rear and observed a light that looked to be a couple of metres across. The light remained to the rear of his car for some 5 minutes before just disappearing.

Near midnight the H (1) family was returning home from the fireworks at the Hobart Regatta, and were travelling north near Mangalore, about the same location as the start of the Melton Mowbray sighting. The father saw what he took to be an approaching aircraft to the west of the highway. The family home is beneath the flight path of commercial flights into Hobart Airport and they see overflights nearly every day. However, the lights ahead crossed to their east and seemed to stop before moving north at slow speed. The family was then rather surprised to find that their car was now overtaking the lights, leaving them behind to the rear on the driver's side. The father saw a red light and a strong white light with a light beaming down below with a flashing blue light. The driver (mother) saw white lights, 3 above, 1 in the centre, and 3 below in a capital I pattern. The son saw a similar pattern to his mother. However, his colours were 3 red above 2 strong yellow white, with 2 flashing blue lights below. The apparent size was hard to estimate and they commented it looked car-sized.

The lights looked low just above the treetops to the east and maybe moving away towards the hills (Butlers Hill?). The father and son tried to look back at

the lights, but they seemed to have disappeared.

About the same time or maybe just after Mrs W (1) on a farm near Rekuna (10 km east of Mangalore) was up late tending to the children. As she went to bed a bright glow outside caught her attention. Looking out she could see that there was something on or just beyond a hill some 4-500m to the north-west. A brilliant white light was shining through the trees, the glow being as tall as the hilltop trees. Mrs W watched for a few minutes but could not make out a source for the light. She continued onto bed. About 10 minutes later, she was still wondering about the light so she got up for another look. The light now seemed to have moved further back from the hill and was not as prominent. A few days later, she visited the light's location but there was nothing to indicate that anyone or anything had been on the hill. The area is rough and rocky with dry grass.

The scene returns to Mangalore at about 1.45am when a lone witness reported a brilliant white light and beam over Laskeys Hill just to the west of Mangalore. The witness who is in the habit of retiring late always inspects the night sky first. The bright ball was illuminating the trees and grass on the hillside. The light remained stationary for nearly 15 minutes before it disappeared at great speed to the east.

The fourth sighting was now made at Native Corners, again about 10 km east of Mangalore and just a few kilometres north of Rekuna. Mrs N (1) said she had to get up in the early hours, about 2am. She found that the usual dark interior of the house was quite bright as if lit up from somewhere. Upon returning to bed

she saw a large white ball low over the hillside north-east of the farm. The light was surrounded by a glow and had a tinge of red on the left hand side. The half-moon-sized light did not show any movement and after some ten minutes, she dozed off to sleep. The next morning, her sister also commented on how bright the area about the house was in the early hours of the morning. The moon had set that night about 10.45pm.

Final Reports.

Two more sightings brought the mini-flap to a close, one from Swansea on the state's East Coast, the second from Campania just a short distance from the events on February 14th.

A Swansea witness awake in the early hours of February 28th (3.30am) noticed a bright light or group of lights to the south-west. The light which was white seemed to also have flashing blue and red lights. At first it looked to move back and forth in a zigzag manner, then north across the western skyline. The witness alerted her partner to view the lights which after 10 minutes were in the north-western sky. The witness did not see what happened to the lights as she returned to bed.

The final event occurred about 9.15pm when Mrs. R(1) of Campania witnessed a row of lights moving low over a hillside just west of the town. There appeared to be something dark with steady white lights on it plus some other coloured lights. The lights looked to be just above a gully before they disappeared behind a small hill. A couple of minutes later, the lights reappeared moving across in front of the hill. The silent object then departed over the gully where it had first been noticed.

Conclusions.

The Centre has investigated the cases to the best of its ability, not recording cases as unexplained when there has been a plausible explanation.

The sightings themselves present some points of interest; to begin with, the obvious close geographical location of the events. Most cases involved a major bright white light, sometimes with a glow or beam of light capable of illuminating the ground below. The objects in all but one case were silent and in most reports made slow movements, quite often at low elevation. A row or group of lights was also reported. The bulk of the cases occurred late at night or in the early hours of the morning.

The sightings on the night of February 14th almost allow one to plot the object's movements. One witness asked "who is driving" and "where does it go"? The ability to seemingly disappear in mid-air almost suggests it does not need to go anywhere locally, but somehow goes back to wherever it came from.

The Centre (4) can with confidence, say that whilst Tasmanians slept soundly in their beds last summer, a UFO moved unimpeded across the night-time skies. Where it came from and where it went is the mystery and that is why the 'U' in UFO still stands for 'Unidentified'.

Notes: (1) Anonymous names used. All real names and addresses of witnesses on file with TUFOIC.

(2) Investigation contacts – Air Traffic Control Hobart and Launceston Airports, Hobart Airport Security, Air Ambulance, Rotor Lift and Helicopter Resources. Tasmania Police, Tasmanian Search & Rescue, Department of Navy, Department of Defence, AAMI (balloon present on holiday weekend),

Paul Jackson (Astronomical), Business and property owners in Melton Mowbray, Kempton, and Bagdad districts.

The Hobart Mercury and Launceston Examiner newspapers.

(3) Articles appeared in the Hobart Mercury on February 17th, 19th, and 24th. The Melton Mowbray sighting appeared on a number of internet sites.

(4) Investigators Keith Roberts, Janis Burns, Ray Thomas.

YEAR TO DATE.

October sees TUFOIC 40 years old, and the Centre received a birthday present with the best run of sightings in about 10 years.

What started as a quiet year almost got out of control following publicity on the Melton Mowbray sightings. The sighting appeared in the press and on the internet at sites overseas. The Centre received radio coverage on the sightings and other recent events. We are pleased to say that the response from the media was accurate and of great assistance to the Centre.

The media exposure saw a host of sightings reported although explanations were forthcoming in a high percentage. Surprisingly not many old cases came to our attention.

The downside were the endless reports of orange lights and flares. The reports take up a lot of time for little return. Parachute flares were let off in the Bellerive area in February, then "hoax balloons" appeared from Burnie to Hobart. One Devonport witness chased an orange light until it fell as a burning bag on the roadside.

TUFOIC 2005

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STATISTICS SEPT 2005

Unidentified	17
Astronomical.....	25
Aircraft.....	13
Satellites.....	8
Balloons/Flares	34
Others.....	17
TOTAL	114

MORE SIGHTINGS

A number of the sightings had similar features, egg shaped, low level, beams.

One such case came from Nunamara near Launceston in July 2004. The witness and her son were travelling north-east on the Tasman Highway about 6.30am. Hovering over the roadside paddock they saw an oval metallic object. It had a bright light that had first caught their attention plus red, blue, and other lights. The witness slowed the car almost to a stop to have a clear view of the object, but it just vanished in mid-air.

Another northern sighting occurred on April 15th at 11.35am. This report was similar to Tamar Valley cases from 1996. It was a fine day with clear blue skies, the witness was heading south

on the road near Bradys Look Out.

He spotted something shiny out over the river. He could see a spherical metallic shape that was so bright it had a reflective halo around it. He slowed his vehicle down, and then pulled over into the car park. In the 20 seconds he was parking the stationary object had vanished.

On April 27th (2005) at 5.20am a lone motorist spotted a strange object near Otago Bay. The object bore an uncanny resemblance to the object seen at Nunamara nearly twelve months earlier.

The motorist noticed a flashing blue light low over the side of the road ahead. It was some 100 metres ahead and 5-10 meters off the ground. The light seemed to be moving to the left of the road between some houses backed by the slope of Mt Direction.

The motorist slowed to a crawl and saw there was something over one of the houses. A metallic spherical object could be seen. There seemed to be patterns on the object with two black areas at the top like windows. All the time there was a bright blue flashing light on the objects bottom left side. The witness felt uneasy at the sighting of the object and hurried off to work. The area was checked out later but no local explanation could be found for the sighting. TUFOIC followed up on aircraft and helicopter movements but all these proved negative.

Another sighting this time in daytime occurred on May 4th (2005) about 10am. A lone fisherman at Squeaking Point (Port Sorell) says something shiny caught his eye. It was another beautiful day with a clear blue sky.

He was puzzled to see a silent grey bullet shaped object out over the water of the port. The object was not much

more than 30-40 meters above the water and about the distance away from the shore.

It had four silver squares like windows along the side but there were no wings or tail pieces evident. It moved very slowly away towards the north. The witness called out to some other fishermen nearby but they failed to hear him. To complete the puzzle the object seemingly just vanished in mid-air.

Once again TUFOIC followed up on aircraft movements and made local contacts but all to no avail. The sighting also received media coverage but no other witnesses were found.

A further case from the North West was reported on May 8th at 6am. This time a farmer at West Takone observed a shiny object catching the early sun low over a hilltop. He was having a cup of coffee when he noticed a bright object with a rounded top and flat base. It was stationary just above the hill line standing out against the clear sky. It was a bright silver colour and some 500 meters distant just above the trees. He observed for about 3-4 minutes before turning to pick up his coffee cup. Looking back he discovered the object had vanished.

The final report also comes from the North West, this time from Burnie one evening in mid June (2005). The witness was waiting to meet a visitor at her front gate. She glanced up at the misty sky and noticed a hexagonal shape coming down through the mist. She was puzzled to then see an orange disc shape leave the object and disappear behind trees to the south-west. The object moved back into the mist but a minute later it reappeared to perform the same manoeuvre of letting off an orange disc. Then it retreated into the clouds

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